

SEATED BUDDHA FROM SARNATH

Buddhism continued to thrive during the Gupta period. Although the Gandhara style eventually declined in influence, the Mathura style gave rise to the Buddhist visual forms found over much of north India, including at sites like Sarnath.

The seated Buddha in **FIGURE 10-16** embodies the fully developed Sarnath Gupta style. Carved from fine-grained sandstone, the figure sits in a yogic posture making the teaching gesture indicative of the First Sermon. This event is further indicated by the presence of devotees/listeners represented on the pedestal along with a wheel whose outer tread faces toward the viewer. The devotees, who may also represent the donors of this image, are joined in their devotion by two divine beings flying in from above. The plain robe, portrayed with none of the creases and folds so prominent in the Kushan-period images, is distinctive of the Sarnath style. The body, clearly visible through the clinging robe, is graceful and slight, with broad shoulders and

a well-proportioned torso. Only a few lines of the garment at the neck, waist, and hems interrupt the purity of its subtly shaped surfaces; the face, smooth and ovoid, has the same refined elegance. The downcast eyes suggest otherworldly introspection, yet the gentle, open posture maintains a human quality. Behind the head is a large, circular halo. Carved in concentric circles of pearls and foliage, the ornate halo contrasts dramatically with the plain surfaces of the figure.



10-16 • BUDDHA PREACHING HIS FIRST SERMON

From Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India. Gupta period, c. 465–485 CE. Sandstone, height 5'3" (1.6 m). Archaeological Museum, Sarnath.